

# the Emily

Vol. 11, No. 2  
2 April, 1993

---

"We can sit in our corners mute forever while our  
sisters and ourselves are distorted, while our  
children are distorted and destroyed, while our  
earth is poisoned; we can sit in our safe corners  
mute as bottles, and will still be no less afraid."—

Audre Lorde

---



# Remembering Audre Lorde

by Karen Ballinger

I find it difficult to think about Audre's death on November 17th, 1992 without feeling anger. Anger that she lived for so short a time - only fifty-six years. Her life was cut short by the cancer for which she had already sacrificed her right breast. I had secretly hoped to see Audre in person one day - to see with my own eyes, the woman who inspired countless women to write poetry and to speak out when all we wanted was to just hide in books and hope the outside world would go away.

Women who have been fortunate enough to read her writings speak her name with reverence. Audre gave us strength with wisdom. She inspired us to be women warriors. Her poem, from The Black Unicorn, "The Women of Dan Dance With Swords in Their Hands To Mark The Time When They Were Warriors" helped me in my own poetic crusade. And later I discovered her essay, "Poetry is Not a Luxury" which contains the statement: "Poetry is the way we help give name to the nameless so it can be thought." She firmly believed in the revolutionary power of poetry. She wrote of her own life, of her trials and joys. She openly and joyfully celebrated Lesbianism. She encouraged women to take whatever erotic powers they wished and not to fear crossing cultural and racial lines as long as there was mutual respect.

Audre also taught us to refuse to allow the patriarchy to pit us against one another:

Lesbian against straight, Black against white. Her essay, "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House," explores the issues of racism and homophobia within the academic feminist community. She demands that white academic feminists address the survival skills of poor women and that conferences must include all women: poor, women of colour and Lesbians in order that all women are represented, not just the elite few presenting their views to their colleagues.

It was her statement about refusing to be silent that struck the resonant chord within my soul. After discovering she had a tumour in her breast, which two doctors said had a 60 to 80 per cent chance of being cancer, Audre wrote "The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action." I quote from a paragraph near the end of this powerful essay:

We can learn to work and speak when we are afraid in the same way we have learned to work and speak when we are tired. For we have been socialized to respect fear more than our own needs for language and definition, and while we wait in silence for that final luxury of fearlessness, the weight of that silence will choke us.

What does all this have to do with this issue of Women and Health? Everything. For many women struggling to survive in poverty their health becomes an issue intrinsically linked to their poverty. This reality was part of Audre's life. She grew up poor, ghettoized and a Black Lesbian. That she lived as a survivor and lived joyously in a system, that constantly

tried to kill her, shows us the resiliency that she lived by. Desperate for money to continue her education, she worked at Keystone Electronics in Stamford which had a government contract to process and deliver quartz crystals. This company was one of the few that hired Blacks and Puerto Ricans. The women read the crystals on a variety of X-ray machines. She ran an X-ray machine without a hood and when she finally quit, the tips of her fingers were permanently darkened from exposure to X-rays. (Zami, 145) I wonder how long she might have lived if she had never had to take such a dangerous job? It is no coincidence that women of colour and poor women have shorter life expectancies than middle and upper class women. The work they do in order to survive directly affects their health, just as the constant struggle of Audre Lorde's early life affected her later health.

As feminists, we need to examine this issue in our own lives as well as in the lives of our sisters. Audre Lorde - Presente.

## Publications:

The Black Unicorn  
Sister Outsider  
Zami: A New Spelling of My Name  
Coal Between Ourselves  
The Cancer Journals  
A Burst of Light  
Undersong

January 27, 1993

Memo to: Traffic and Security  
From: UVic Women's Centre

We were appalled to see pictures of pornographic and degrading messages in the hallway of the 4th floor Carroll in Lansdowne. The main picture depicted a naked woman straddling a motorcycle in a degrading manner. Residents graffitied it with comments such as, "This is the whore of 4th Carroll," and "These are fuck me boots."

These types of messages are far from acceptable as violence against women is a scary and serious reality that should not be made light of. We are sure you will agree with us on the severity of this matter. Due to your quick response policy in eliminating the chalk graffiti on campus on December 4th, we expect nothing less than immediate response regarding the pornography. Because of the serious nature of this matter, it would be inappropriate to simply remove these posters. Fining the floor or holding a building meeting on the importance of eliminating violent messages would be in order. We wish to be informed of your action on this matter.

Copies to:

Dr. Strong  
Sheila Devine, Equity Office  
Barbara Whittington,  
Harassment Office  
The Martlet  
The Emily  
Women's Studies Dept.

February 2, 1993

Memo to: UVic Women's Centre

From: Ken Marrison, Assistant Manager — Security, Traffic, Security & Motor Pool  
Re: Fourth Floor Carroll Residence — Offensive Material

Your memorandum of January 27, 1993 refers.

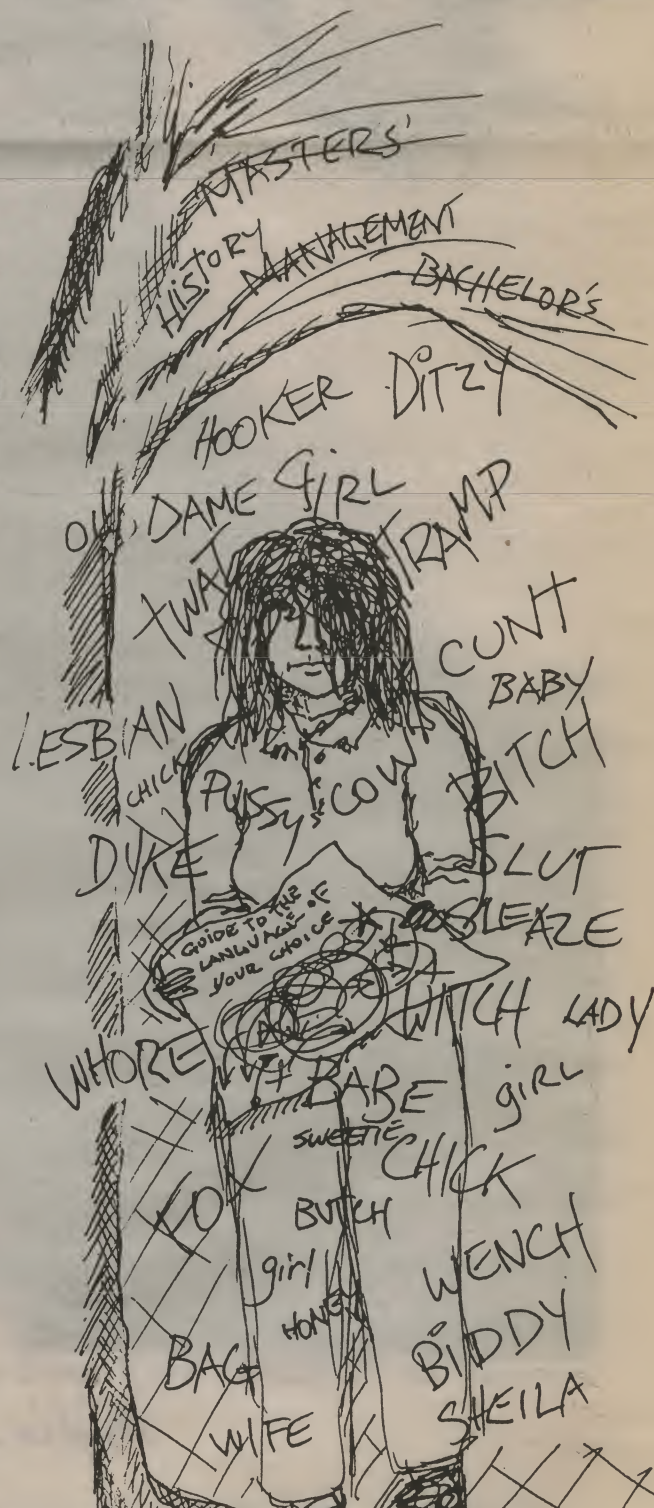
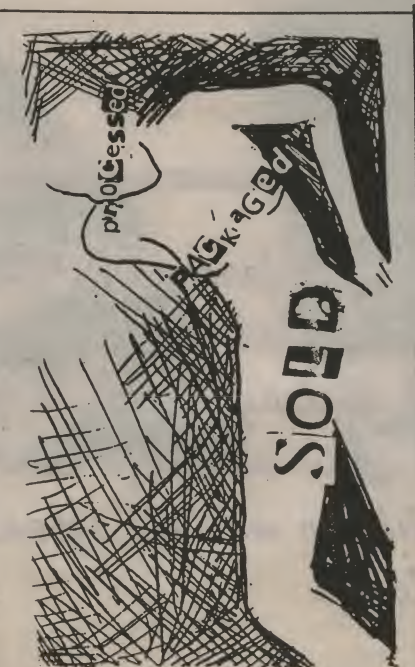
Thank you for bringing this matter to my attention. The offensive material referred to in your correspondence has been removed by staff at Housing. Housing have a policy of removing this type of material as soon as it is discovered. If they are able to determine who is responsible, that person(s) is counselled by Housing management. I am informed that in most instances they are able to resolve the matter in this manner. In those cases where counselling is ineffective, further disciplinary action is taken. You may wish to contact Mr. Gavin Quiney, Manager, Housing and Conference Services direct to discuss their procedures.

c.c. Dr. David F. Strong, President

Mr. Gavin Quiney, Manager, Housing and Conference Services

Ms. Sheila Devine,  
Assistant to the  
President/Director, Equity  
Issues  
Ms. Barbara Whittington,  
Harassment/Sexual  
Harassment Advisor  
The Martlet  
The Emily  
Women's Studies

UVIC IS NOT A  
SAFE  
PLACE FOR WOMEN





# POEMS ETC.

Dear Emily.

It's time to tell a story, admit to the existence of some pain, get angry at the pain giver, accept the past and go on. It's been seven years.

Summer 1985.

When I was 15 I was truly naive and at the same time adventurous. I snuck out of my house at night through bedroom windows and drank anything I could get my hands on. I rode around in fast cars with guys in their 20's, flaunting my body and my tight little ass as a tool to get what I wanted. Which was oblivion. I remember the one I wanted most, the oldest, the playboy, the challenge and the dangerous one.

He had the hottest car and seduced the most beautiful girls. He noticed my ass.

I didn't hold anything back, had no limitations. I hadn't experienced sex, drugs or older men or wanted to, until I met him. I had lived on a farm out of town until my father died, during the fall of the previous year.

I thought I had fallen in love. I remember vaccuming the basement and aching to catch him and be "his woman." One night the opportunity came. I had a big party in my house and everyone came. I was so completely intoxicated that I can still blurily picture myself sliding down the wall as my head spun out of control. I ended up in my mother's bed that night and before long I was not alone. He took control of the situation and decided on just how to penetrate me. He knew that I was completely innocent. He entered me, but not in the way I was told it would be. He never broke me he just embarrassed me. He never wanted me, he just wanted my beautiful little ass. He got off, he left.

This was my first sexual experience. I figured that I asked for it. Now, I think that he should have at least told me what he was about to do. He should have treated me as a human being with feelings that needed to be respected. I may as well have been a dog. Is this rape?

by Anonymous

Orchard

My mother braided streams into my hair before I was old enough to know stories of waterfalls and silver trees and golden apples. When someone was crossed the heavens flew downstream and washed whole villages and time into epilogues.

My mother braid streams into my hair when I was too restless to feel the wisdom of her fingers as they wove something deeper than tales something more intricate than the flurry of entwined crosses that fall like snow.

My mother braided streams into my hair because wind with irreverent nails pulled it into the earth, clouds, sun, and sky like an alchemist, the wind made from my hair things that I cannot name.

My mother braided streams into my hair like prayers in the face of a sleeping moon. When the sun fell down into the ocean someone braided stars into the night sky like the orchard thick with fog beyond the gardens where the apples are hung like bows.

by Nick Nolet

Alone

Alone  
Yet One  
With All  
Each Of Us  
Stands

Sometimes We Touch  
Share An Echo  
Of Creator's Joy  
When S/He made us

Let Me  
Stand Clear  
A Sign  
To My People

Let Me Love  
Without Regret

Let Me Learn  
To See  
Watch Me

Become One  
With(In)  
One

And I Will  
Reach Out My Hand  
To You.

by K. Cormack

Another Busy Day  
In The Capital Regional District

I was thinking like an intersection when the limousine spoke to me. Bentover, I was unlocking my bike. I had just bought words on Ecofeminism from EveryWoman's Bookstore, stuffed the Visa receipt into a pocket. Then I was off to see my lover, the guy who made me angry last night.

GOODMORNING, said Limo,  
STEP BACK FROM THE CAR, THANK YOU.

It was male, or pretending to be male. I pictured a man inside the frosted window, pressing buttons, pulling levers, just like the Wizard of Oz. But then I remembered -Hey, this is almost the twenty-first century.

Limo was smugly plum and grey like empty lounge seats inside the Carlton Plaza Hotel. The vacated chairs peered out the window as if on a veranda overlooking daffodil gardens, manicured hedges. Weeded. Sprayed. Red light.

Here I stand, balancing on a curb next to old portly uniform, an officer from the naval base.

He waits for the blinking orange hand. His shades are yellow, dreamy with eagles, cigars, white paint. I dismiss him with the arrogance and revulsion of a student. And then he walks up to me. "You look serious," he says.

I smile like I should, I say, "I'm having a busy day."

I'm uncomfortable and he's uncomfortable.

Where is the white man flashing the goose-step?

I think about my lover. In one hour, I'll see his greying eyes, his body pulling away-Green light. As I pedal up-hill, my thigh muscles strain. Pushing through intersections, I think of sweat, Chinese food, apartment complexes, yellow lines in the center of the road. I think about how my bike gets me where I want to go. She always does.

by Shannon Cooley

Overexposure-

Wake Up!  
Slap, slap, slap.  
Ice cold bucket of water while you're sleeping  
Menstrual blood actually leaking out  
Man flashing his penis in your face.

Illuminate your mind with it.

Honesty in all brutality  
Awareness, consciousness  
Real Reality.

As sweet as the moments you can be ecstatic about breathing.

It is a necessary ingredient in a world which remains apathetic and numb.  
Feel the pain.

Turn your channel to the real program  
You have been living a censored life.

Don't take it out on each other  
Don't take it out on your children  
Don't take it out on the planet.

Fuck modesty  
It doesn't protect you and while you worry about it someone slips you poison.

Poison to give, to take

Poison to wear  
Poison to ingest.

A body rots from the inside out  
A body rots when the brain is silenced  
When the air that circulates inside becomes stagnant.

The space in the spirit dwelling place is permeated by a smog of putrid poison and the spirit withers.

I'm fed up with your poison  
Your food  
Your sperm  
Your fucking Commercials.  
You can't stop me from exposing myself anymore  
You can only give me a ticket  
And I won't pay it asshole!

by Michelle Peters



WHY IS A CUCUMBER BETTER THAN A MAN?  
① IT STAYS HARDER LONGER AND YOU CAN MAKE A SALAD LATER  
② A CUCUMBER DOESN'T MAKE A WET SPOT OR MAKE YOU SLEEP ON IT.

③ A CUCUMBER WILL NEVER COMPARE YOU WITH THEIR LAST LOVER.  
④ A CUCUMBER NEVER MAKES YOU WEAR A NEG.LIGEE.  
⑤ YOU DONT HAVE TO MAKE A CUCUMBER BREAKFAST.

CUCUMBERS ARE CHEAP, HARD & BIO-DEGRADABLE



©1986 M.K. BROWN

# LET'S DO THE WHITE GIRL TWIST (LIKE WE DID LAST SUMMER)



## EARLY SYMPTOMS OF TOXIC SHOCK SYNDROME

Courtesy of the Women's Environmental Network, Great Britain

Early TSS symptoms resemble flu and include:

- \*sudden high fever, around 102 degrees F or 38.9 degrees C, or higher
- \*nausea
- \*vomiting
- \*sore throat
- \*aching muscles
- \*dizziness, fainting or near fainting when standing up
- \*sunburn-like peeling rash, especially on hands and feet

If you have any of these symptoms and are using a tampon, remove it and contact your doctor for immediate treatment. Tell your doctor you have been using tampons and think that you may have TSS.

The acute phase of TSS progresses with rapid loss of blood pressure (hypotension), toxins oozing from orifices, shedding skin (desquamation), respiratory failure and kidney failure. Necrosis (a decay of cells caused by poor blood supply) can cause the loss of fingers and toes. After effects can include hair and fingernail loss, double vision, headaches, deafness, a loss of concentration and arthritis. The effects can last for months, years or, in some cases, permanently.



## HERSPECTIVES

Wise Women • Strong Women • Healers • Peacemakers

HERSPECTIVES is a feminist magazine of common women's dialogue that crosses all lines of communication. New and inexperienced writers are welcome.

We give license to all those wise, strong, healers and peacemakers who want or need to **BREAK ALL THE RULES.**

Our focus is on reproductive freedom, self-determination and empowerment, the feminization of poverty and the divinity within.

Subscriptions are:  
\$22 - 35/yr (\$35-45-US)  
Single copy \$6  
Direct all inquiries with SASE to:

Mary Billy, editor  
Box 2047, Squamish, B.C.  
Canada V0N 3G0

JOIN THE MAGIC CIRCLE





# HOW WOMEN ARE BLED FOR BIG BUCKS

by Karen Ballinger

To write about women's "sanitary products" is to write about women's health being compromised by big businesses. First, we have to dispel the myth that these commodities are sanitary. They are not sterile products, but cleverly marketed, possibly carcinogenic (non)disposable pads and tampons that can affect a woman's personal environment while, at the same time, contributing to the rest of the world's environmental disaster. Many women who have switched to true (non)disposable pads have reported that they have lighter periods with less cramping. The overpackaged multinational products are not the wonderful products that our grandmothers and mothers thought they were. They are manufactured using dioxin and bleaches which adversely affect the environment spewing out poisons into the atmosphere. After using a bleached tampon, where do these products go? Down the toilet, most likely where they contribute significantly to the other non-disposable flushed objects that require special "tampon squads" to come in and clear them out. Then they are trucked to the dump where they sit for many years, continuing to leach out the variety of poisons used in their composition, and contribute to the landfill problems. This is what they do to our outside environment. But what they do to our inner one is even more dangerous.

Simply stated, tampons can kill you. Tampons, in the United States, in a 1981 FDA study, contain dozens of elements (such as boron, aluminum, and copper and compounds - waxes, surfactants, alcohols, acids, nitrogen compounds and hydrocarbons) that could leach from them.<sup>1</sup> When I wrote to Tambrands with my concerns I received back a patronizing letter from one Monique L. Girard, RN, (was her title supposed to re-assure me?) stating, "All but trace elements of dioxin are washed from the resulting fibres so dioxin levels in the rayon we buy do not present a health risk." She goes on to admit that, although, there is a process that reduces dioxin to the vanishing point...[but] this requires a major capital expenditure." This expenditure, which would improve the safety of the tampon both for women and the environment, is apparently, despite the \$80 million that Tambrands make every year from Canadian women, too much to ask from this multinational.<sup>2</sup> Tambrands think it is too expensive

to ensure that dioxin are substantially reduced. What does this tell us about their true priorities?

In *Whitewash*, by Liz Armstrong and Adrienne Scott, they state that "dioxin is actually a family of seventy-five related organochlorines." They quote Tom Webster, a researcher with the Center for the Biology of Natural Systems at Queens College, New York, who explains, "They cause a whole spectrum of effects, including cancer, birth defects, atrophy of the thymus, liver damage, reduced immunity, reproductive failure, skin disfigurement and weight loss. Although, the outcomes may vary from species to species - and are hotly contested in humans - the dioxin-like compounds are some of the most toxic and potent cancer-causing agents ever evaluated." Nice to think about what you are shoving up into your vagina isn't it?

And what about Toxic Shock Syndrome. Everyone seems to think it has gone away with Rely tampons. But every year women get sick and some women die from this totally unnecessary disease. The waxed wick is a perfect host to allow the bacteria to enter. Tampons can cause tiny ulcers and irritation in the sensitive vaginal area. (See side panel for symptoms.) But the only cases that get recorded are the ones that fit the criteria. This needs repeating. The Centre for Disease Control records only cases that fit into the criteria which are: a fever of 38.9 degrees C (102 degrees F), a rash, following by the peeling of the skin two weeks after onset, (described in one case as clumps of skin like orange peeling) low blood pressure and involvement of three major organ systems. So milder cases, those involving only two major organ systems, wouldn't be recorded.<sup>3</sup> One survivor became deaf, bald, lost most of her toes and fingers and had to have skin grafts.

But you are saying to yourself, I don't use tampons. I use (non)disposables. Canadian women send one billion disposable pads per year to landfills and sewage treatment plants<sup>4</sup> And this number is increasing with the number of non-menstruating women with bladder problems who also use these bleached commodities. They, too, could use re-usables and save themselves considerable money. Let us try to forget the image of men, once again, dictating to women what goes into and on their bodies or how even the word, "menstruation" is never used in their advertising. One exception I found was Carefree Breathable

Panty Shields are advertised as "for more freshness on non-menstrual days." These panty shields are promoted to young women ages 12-14 to instill in them the idea that women's bodies are unclean, and most importantly, to hook them into daily use of pantliners, thus, greatly increasing their corporate profits by increasing usage from an average five days a month to a full month. (Silly me, I thought that was why we wore underwear.) And that their advertising persistently makes menstruation a secret that must be kept at all costs. Tambrands in their latest propaganda pamphlet claim, "Since 1935, Tampax Tampons have been helping Canadian women feel better about their periods." I hate to break it to them, but I feel just fine about my period as I am sure the majority of women do, unless they believe those ridiculous ads on television. No mention of the difficulties of disposing tampons and the problems created when the "flushable" applicator is sent down into the sewage system.

## Simply stated, tampons can kill you

When I wrote to Tambrands, I also wrote to Johnson & Johnson (Stayfree, Carefree, o.b. tampons, Sure & Natural, Sure & Natural Prima) and Kimberley-Clark (Kotex pads, New Freedom, Lightdays pantyliners). Neither of these two latter companies bothered to answer my letters. None of these three companies, indeed, no companies at all will voluntarily admit what is actually in their products. In *Whitewash* I found out some of this information. "Slim" "maxi" products such as Johnson & Johnson's "Sure & Natural" and P&G's "Always Ultra" include another component. Both are impregnated with synthetic gelling crystals that can absorb many times their weight in liquids. The safety of these super-absorbent polyacrylates was hotly debated when companies began using them in ultra-thin disposable diapers in 1986, but their presence in sanitary pads is almost unknown and is rarely questioned. "Shampoos and a host of other beauty products are required to list their ingredients but not women's (non) sanitary products which come in contact with one of the most sensitive areas of the body. These products are exempt from public scrutiny.

Okay, okay you are saying. What should I use? There are a variety of alternatives available. If you still find it necessary to use (non)disposable at

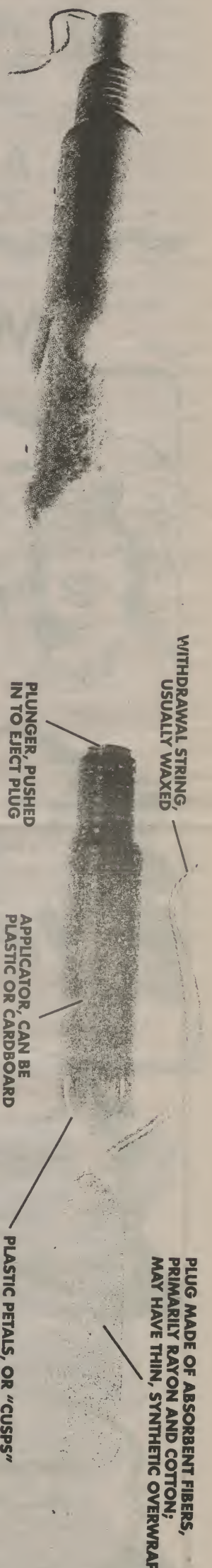
least buy unbleached tampons and pads at your nearest health food store. Don't flush them down the toilet and into the ocean. Wrap in unbleached toilet paper after use and throw away. A better alternative might be a sea sponge, also available at health food stores. Read the new *Our Bodies, Our Selves* for full instructions. Order a re-usable menstrual cup called the *Keeper*. (And come into the Women's Centre to see about a possible group purchase) Buy or better yet, make your own re-usable menstrual pads in wild and colourful patterns. If you decide to buy, buy locally from Many Moons, or purchase at the Sierra Club in Market Square. And join with your sisters in writing to the federal government demanding that these products be required to list all their ingredients. While you are at it, demand GST be removed. Remember, an election is coming up so, now is the time put the pressure on the federal government. No postage is required. Send copies to every government person you can think of, like the NDP Health Critic, Health and Welfare, as well as to the Prime Minister. He lives with a woman who presumably menstruates and he also has a daughter. Write to the companies themselves asking why they refuse to divulge ingredient information and why they continue to refuse to sell unbleached products. Demand they reduce their packaging. When I wrote to Tambrands suggesting that like Natracare, they put the information inside the package instead of on a separate sheet they replied, "there is a greater chance that consumers will not read the information." (Obviously, women in Europe are more intelligent and able to read inside packages, but Canadian women aren't.) It took the women in Great Britain just six weeks to force the manufacturers to change to unbleached products. Join WEED (Women and Environments Education and Development, 736 Bathurst St reet, Toronto, Ontario M5S 2R4 or phone 416-516-2600). As feminists and consumers we have a lot of clout. we can change the world. All we have to do is start right now. With our next period.

<sup>1</sup> Holmes, Hannah. The Truth About Tampons. Garbage Magazine, Nov/Dec. 1990.

<sup>2</sup> Quote from Susan Cochrane, VP Marketing and Public Relations in "Re-Usable Menstrual Pads?" Helen MacDonald, *Earthkeeper*, July/Aug 91.

<sup>3</sup> Armstrong, Liz and Adrienne Scott. *Whitewash*: 107.

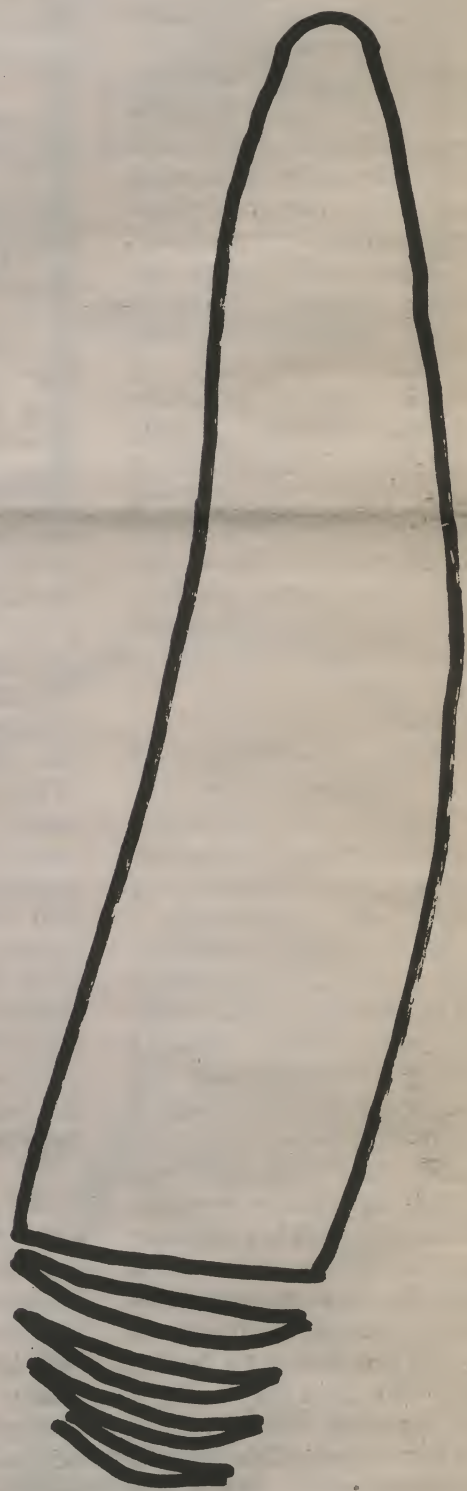
<sup>4</sup> MacDonald, Helen. Ibid.





- ⑥ YOU CAN HAVE SAFE SEX WITH A CUCUMBER + EAT IT TOO.
- ⑦ YOU DON'T NEED A CONDOM, JUST CONDIMENTS.
- ⑧ YOU DON'T HAVE TO TELL A CUCUMBER HOW GOOD IT WAS.
- ⑨ A CUCUMBER DOESN'T GIVE YOU RAZOR OR CARPET BURN.
- ⑩ YOU ALWAYS KNOW EXACTLY HOW LONG A CUCUMBER IS.
- ⑪ YOU CAN FAKE WITH A CUCUMBER AND IT WON'T GET UPSET.
- ⑫ A CUCUMBER NEVER WANTS TO COMPARE GPA'S.
- ⑬ YOU CAN HAVE AS MANY CUCUMBERS AS YOU WANT.

## MARRIAGE & MIRAGE





## EDITORS

Catherine Clark  
Karen Ballinger

## CONTRIBUTORS

Anonymous  
Catherine Clark  
Donna Karlson  
Ida Eriksen  
Jacqueline Crummey  
Karen Ballinger  
Kimberly Cormack  
Melanie Stewart  
Michelle Peters  
Miranda Duffy  
Nick Nolet  
Shannon Cooley  
Tracy Nishimura

*The Emily* consists of an editorial collective (partly funded through the workstudy program and personal donations) and through contributing volunteers. All women at UVic are welcome to become members of *The Emily* Editorial Collective and/or contributors. All contributors copyrights remain with the author.



*The Emily's* primary aim is to promote women's writing at UVic and to provide a forum for feminist debate. We print nothing that is misogynist, heterosexist, homophobic, racist, ageist, sexist or otherwise discriminatory in nature.



*The Emily* is funded by the UVSS and by individual donations. All correspondence should be addressed to:

*The Emily*, c/o the UVic Women's Centre, Room 146, Student Union Building, P.O. Box 3035, Victoria, B.C. V8W 3P3. Phone 721-8353 or fax 721-8743

# Drugs, The Mental Health Care System and Feminist Counselling

by Donna Karlson

All women experience oppression in one form or another. Some women internalize their oppression through the outward form of drug use. Drugs are dispensed by our judges and jury — men; drugs are used as placebos for women's "psychiatric problems." Addiction arises not because of lack of will or inherent disease, but because of constant social, political, economic, psychological and physical oppression — VIOLENCE — that colonizes our hearts and minds and bodies, that numbs us into silence. We become helpless; we are blamed, pathologized, and deemed "unfit." The cycle continues: oppression, and always back to drugs. We are silenced more and more. We beat our children, beat ourselves; we attempt suicide; we are put in hospitals. We become further victims of the mental health care system. We fall into therapy. It's our only hope, we think.

It was my only hope, I thought. Therapy in the psychiatric ward of the hospital was something that would help me be a good wife and mother, to get the dishes done without throwing them around, not to scream at my husband before he opened his mouth, safely and happily to take care of my babies. Each time I was hospitalized, no questions were asked about my role as wife and mother; no questions were asked about how I got to this state of anxiety; no questions were asked as to my childhood and if I ever experienced sexual abuse. The drugs were poured into me — Valium, amniriprylene, Librium — to get me to function "properly." The focus was on me — what could I do to change and adjust myself to life, to traditional family structure? Surely I could handle things at home — my husband didn't drink; he wasn't unfaithful. I had two lovely daughters, a house, a car, a white picket fence. What more could I want? The guilt was tremendous, the punishment endless — more pills every day, dizziness, inability to speak, hallucinations — in other words, total dysfunction, which only served to reinforce the doctor's view of me as unfit, sick, and truly manic-depressive! The guilt compounded enough to deem me fit for three breakdowns, three hospital stays where the procedure continued unabated.

My last hospitalization, I said no to the drugs. I awoke; I took responsibility for my life; I began to search for the rea-

sons for my "breakdowns." It's so easy to turn to drugs, to defer to male authority. It is ingrained in us to believe that the male doctors have only our best interests at heart. During my second hospital stay, I began to tell my doctor my story; he phoned my parents and berated them, and he gave me more drugs. I wonder what would have happened if I had told of the façade I constantly maintained about motherhood, work, sex, relationships. What if I told the truth and then said "NO MORE!" My search for help without drugs has led me through a maze of traditional therapy and its inherent labelling, pathologizing, non-validation and non-support for being a female in a male world. I finally made my way to a feminist therapist, a remarkable, kind, caring woman who believes and practices "feminist therapy." She worked through a non-profit agency; therapy was free, and I finally began to be free. We had a mutually satisfying and equal working relationship. She had no mysterious professional technique, nor was she the omnipotent professional. She constantly validated me; my pain, my fear, and most importantly, she empowered me and really believed I had the power to affect change within myself and around me.

There was no diagnosis, no chart on me. She encouraged me to act rather than react — a common response for most women. As I made personal, physical and internal changes in my life, I began to open my eyes to how deeply entrenched my attitudes are of being feminine in this world. I began to develop a feminist consciousness; I started to develop a deep desire to affect change in the larger political sphere.

I left a job where I was violated emotionally and physically; I named the violation to my employer and to people around me; I lobbied against unfair hiring practices by a local employer. I wrote letters; I broke the silence. Most importantly, I broke the silence about my incest experiences in my childhood. I talked to all

who would hear of one woman's life.

Many, many times I was afraid that I was not being "nice," that I was being too radical! And yet I kept on; someone has to hear the story of what oppression, drugs and the mental health care system had done and continues to do to women. What has sustained me many times is something I read a long time ago in a drug-induced haze: "What would happen if a woman told the truth of her life? The world would split open!"

The upshot is I have been in and out of therapy — good, feminist therapy and poor, medical-based, male-biased therapy. And now I question what "being in therapy" implies. Even ideal, pro-woman, feminist therapy with its aim of decreasing the differentials of power and control within and out of therapy still reinforces that women's problems are individual ones. In my opinion, this is why it is so essential to women to have larger community involvement and healing, to recognize that through the oppression of women, all members of society have suffered! Sending the drug-addicted woman to a rehabilitation centre and then bringing her back to her community where the oppression still occurs, with no responsibility taken by family and friends, it is tantamount to suicide for the woman!

As Helen Levine states, "Feminist counselling carries within its mandate a healing process, an educational process, and a political process, based on a feminist understanding of society, its institutions, and structures and the women and men who live in it." The healing occurs when humanity heals.

Some further questions about feminist therapy:

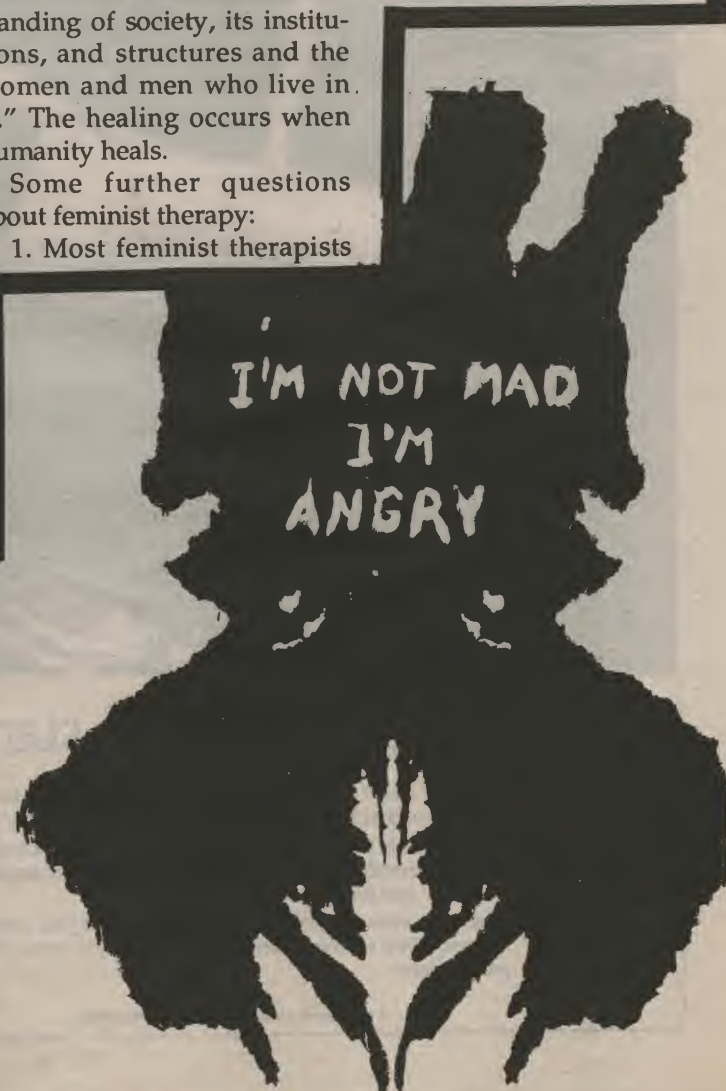
1. Most feminist therapists

were trained in a system that is sexist, elitist and hierarchical. Although the aim of feminist therapy is more appropriate than that of traditional therapy, this does not mean that feminists therapists are totally free from bias. This is an aspect overlooked by many of us. One way for women to take control is to hold the therapist accountable for non-sexist, non-biased, truly caring therapy. This could be done by tapping the sessions, an important form of consumer protection for women and a good learning tool for the therapist herself.

2. Something else to consider: Is therapy becoming the opiate of women? Therapy itself may strengthen the belief that women's unhappiness stems from the individual. Clearly, and I quote from Paula Caplan, "There can never be enough good feminist therapists to pick up the pieces the misogynist cyclone leaves in its daily wake."

3. Most important is the notion of the "elitism" of therapy. As Women's Studies students, we debate patriarchy, sexism, feminist theory and language; we intellectually treat the written word of women's reality. We are privileged women. We are receiving a higher education; we are not homeless and we are not hungry. But so many women fall outside feminist rhetoric and solidarity. What about the 23-year-old woman who attempted suicide for the fifth time, just discharged, with no money, no home, no vocabulary

*continued on page 8..*





# A CALL TO WRITING

by Melanie Stewart

I write. And as I do so, I force my way through a thick, densely forested region, a wild enclosure in which I claw and spit, and grasp for the air that hangs thick and humid. Never enough. Air.

I write. And as I do so, I raise my sharp knife to the foliage, stubborn and tough, with vines twisting their way to fill every available inch. Struggling to clear, to dislodge, to make room, I move slowly and willfully, extending my arms now to reach a growth above me, now to hurl the leafy debris away.

I write. And as I do so, I begin to see a clearing develop, a gap in the jungle, a respite from the density. I can slowly unclench the fist that has gripped so tightly my weapon, and breathe the coolness of space unencumbered. Space unfilled. I look around and I can see you; you with your unspoken words and your unwritten text. You, with your own knife hanging at your side waiting for you. Waiting for us.

\*\*\*

*The Emily* has been in publication for twelve years. It is symbolic of similar efforts by thousands of women around the world to create spaces for

expression unmediated by patriarchal culture. It is a newspaper for women by women about women's lives. It is ours, and its potential is limited only by the enthusiasm with which it is received, and the commitment with which it is produced.

Yet, *The Emily* remains a small, marginalized paper which is constantly under threat of complete destruction. No money. No equipment. No facilities. It lives the kind of hand-to-mouth existence that has become the tired cliché of feminist periodicals. It is only for the women's community and it is not important. Recipes and the like...And anyway, no one is interested. No submissions.

Where are the women writers of UVic? Have our heads been so buried beneath a stack of geography texts in the McPherson Library that we have internalized the "Shhhh!" sign? Are we so completely satisfied with the silky, lyric tones of *The Martlet* that we can only aspire to a far-off fantasy of one day submitting a letter to the editor? Are we basking in post-feminist rhetoric and heaving sighs of relief that it's all over?

I don't think so. I think there are many reasons why you, like me, haven't written for *The Emily*, for any other publication, perhaps even for yourself.

Somehow, the act of writing remains one of great mystique, reserved for the privilege of "The Artist" who, in (sic.) his tortured state manages to capture in one finely crafted image not only the meaning of life and the infinite beauty of nature, but (un)intentionally, the essence of violence through language in our culture. And who are we to pollute "Literature" with our trivialities, our "simple" pleasures, our menstrual blood, our anger? And what tool do we have to do so anyway? A phallogocentric language that orders our thoughts and binds our imaginations? And who is this "we" anyway? Why would "we" who have been so defined, so essentialized, want to exclude ourselves further by espousing the glories of some mythical "feminine voice," in a newspaper that perpetuates our marginalization?

Yet, I believe the alternative silence and complicity in the decay of newspapers like *The Emily* is far more dangerous. It is the danger of silence; of being seen but not heard. It is biting our tongues and strangling our minds. It is self annihilation.

\*\*\*

This is a call to writing. It is an attempt to stress the importance of giving ourselves and other women the permission to write and to be read. The

women who have been contributing to, editing, and supporting newspapers like *The Emily* have opened a space for the rest of us. They have given us a platform for our concerns, pages to fill with our imaginations, a room of our own. We have only to take it.

## READING & WRITING



ly involved with the sexual division of labour, money, decision-making power, and in general, men's power over women. Therefore, feminist counselling strikes at the heart through consciousness-raising, through what are women's daily experiences and the causes and potential solutions, internally and externally, of our problems. Consciousness-raising occurs in feminist therapy as a co-operative, non-hierarchical, peer type of relationship. This is the opposite of traditional therapy. In feminist therapy, feminist and consumer work together. There is an equality, a sharing of knowledge and experience. This promotes empowerment. Central to feminist therapy is the absence of adjustment, of pathologizing, of blame, of the "isms" of the real world. Also, within feminist therapy is the goal of autonomy in the larger sphere of interdependence, a view of life in a more round, whole way.

Essentially, feminist therapy's goal is a fundamental shift in the way of feeling, thinking, analyzing and participating in life. This is achieved through the woman's particular pace, preferences and priorities — therapy on her own timing, not the counsellor's timing. This is crucial. The silence is broken through the emphasis on mutuality, by the breaking down of the programming we all share — namely, that our lives are private; our underbellies are too white; they cannot be exposed; we will die if we do talk. This kind of isolation keeps us disempowered and alienated from ourselves and each other. But by connecting internal turmoil with external structures of patriarchy, we have one more resource for taking control of our lives, individually and collectively. It integrates the spheres of personal life and public responsibility!



## A lot of campus rapes start here.

Whenever there's drinking or drugs, things can get out of hand. So it's no surprise that many campus rapes involve alcohol. But you should know that under any circumstances, sex without the other person's consent is considered rape. A felony, punishable by prison. And drinking is no excuse. That's why, when you party, it's good to know what your limits are. You see, a little sobering thought now can save you from a big problem later.

© 1990 Rape Treatment Center, Santa Monica Hospital

continued from page 7

lary, no concepts to even understand feminism, let alone feminist therapy? Her world is one of physical and sexual assault, of having the "protection" of a boyfriend who occasionally gives her a black eye and broken ribs. She and many other women live in our world of bias based on income and class. She is one that repeatedly visits the psychiatric ward and comes out with a pocket full of drugs and no money for a feminist therapist.

And what about some of the women students in this university? Many are living below the national level of poverty on student loans. I'm living on a student loan and I can't afford feminist therapy. The waiting lists for free feminist therapy are months long. We are not all in the same class with similar incomes. But we may be depressed, we may be anxious, we may be anxious, we may be taking Valium for our "nerves"; we may even be addicted! Pain cuts through class, race and economic barriers. We all have a lot in common. Feminist therapy can help us be whole, when we can get it. And yet the delineation for feminist counselling exists: namely that the personal and the political are inextricably interwoven- the personal pain of drug addiction is dialectical-